

Mental Health in Motion benefits youth programs in York and South Simcoe

Youth mental health is in crisis at the moment, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association, a problem only compounded by the global pandemic.

But whether you run, walk or ride or hop, skip or jump, any forward momentum you choose in the weeks ahead could help young people in York Region and South Simcoe get the help they need through Mental Health in Motion.

Mental Health in Motion, the biggest annual fundraiser hosted by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) of York Region and South Simcoe is in high gear once again, this time in a virtual format after taking a year off in the early days of COVID-19.

The event's goal is to raise more than \$125,000, which will go directly to youth programs, including the CMHA's MOBYSS bus, Ontario's first and only mobile health clinic for people between the ages of 12 and 25.

A staggering 75 per cent of all adults report the onset of their mental illness in adolescence, says Rebecca Shields, CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) of York Region and South Simcoe. We are so grateful to our donors, participants, and supporters, and especially Staples Canada, who have had the foresight to see the dire effect the pandemic is having on everyone's mental health, particularly our youth, and are stepping up to make a difference.

One such person stepping up to make a difference is Catherine Matzig, Senior Director of Philanthropy for CMHA York Region and South Simcoe. Having set herself a personal goal of running 100 total kilometres by June 13, the day of the Mental Health in Motion virtual kickoff, she says participants can set their own goals while collecting pledges for the organization.

This is our first year of being a virtual event and we are encouraging people to run, walk and ride, but also hop, skip and jump, she says. There is the usual 5, 10, 20 km but this year participants can Choose their Own Adventure. You can set a distance goal and do it over time. We have a wonderful group of core participants who have been with us for many years and are committed to youth mental health, the CMHA, and this event. We're very fortunate to have their continued support and the support of new people in our community as well as those who understand that, this year especially, mental health is on all of our minds. It is part of ongoing conversations with the effects of the pandemic on our mental health and youths.

Their mental health is being disproportionately affected by the pandemic and that is what makes this event more important this year than ever before to ensure our programs and services remain open and available whenever a young person in our community reaches out for support.

Registration for Mental Health in Motion is free and open now.

Programs that are part of the initiative will take place entirely virtually and will run through to the end of June.

While you can start your own adventure at any time, the CMHA will host a virtual kick-off event on Sunday, June 13, at 9 a.m., providing several opportunities to connect with other participants.

What we're trying to accomplish in the lead-up to our kick-off event is to create a community of supporters because we know that the sense of community of all coming together in one place on one day to support this event and to support our youth is impossible this year, so we have created a number of events leading up to the virtual kickoff, says Ms. Matzig. People have helped us create a Mental Health in Motion motivational playlist which we have been sharing on Spotify. We have hosted a virtual yoga session for runners and cyclists sponsored by lululemon Upper Canada Mall. We have invited participants to be present at our virtual speaker series.

The last event was in May during Mental Health Week. We have been trying to bring people together in different ways this year

and build community around Mental Health in Motion in some creative ways since we are all in it together ? but we are still far apart. We encourage you to sign up. It is very easy to create your own customized fundraising page and to invite friends, family and colleagues to support you in supporting an organization and cause that you're very passionate about and that is incredibly meaningful, especially now.?

For more on the Mental Health in Motion event ? including how to sign up or make a pledge to your favourite participant ? visit cmhainmotion.ca.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter